

Article 3, Special Town Meeting

Capital Budget / School Capacity Expansion

Recommended Vote:

That the Town appropriate and borrow the sum of \$2,550,000 for the architectural design, engineering, and project management of the Gibbs School building, located at 41 Foster Street, Arlington, Massachusetts 02474, and authorize the Treasurer with the approval of the Selectmen, to issue any bonds or notes that may be necessary for that purpose, as authorized by General Laws Chapter 44, § 7, or any other general or special law, provided, however, that this appropriation and debt authorization be contingent upon passage of a Proposition 2½ debt exclusion referendum under General Laws Chapter 59, § 21C (k).

Snapshot of Arlington Enrollment

School Year	Enrollment	Significance
2000 – 2001	4,200	Elementary school rebuild project – second phase.
2010 – 2011	4,800	Thompson rebuild project / enrollment five years ago.
2015 – 2016	5,300	Current academic year
2020 – 2021	5,800	Projected enrollment in five years
2025 – 2026	5,900	Projected enrollment in ten years

Snapshot of School Capacity

No significant increases in school facility capacity over the last fifteen years:

2000-2001: 7 elementary, 1 middle, 1 high school.

2015-2016: 7 elementary, 1 middle, 1 high school.

NOTE: Minuteman High School, which we love and cherish, is not counted in this summary because the student enrollment is not included on the prior tab.

Snapshot of School Capacity (cont.)

In the 1980's, school capacity was optimized with the closure of four elementary schools (Crosby, Parmenter, Locke, Cutter) and one junior high (Gibbs).

These closures were done to align with the decrease in student population.

The school closures left Arlington with some, but not an abundance of unused capacity.

School Level Illustration

THOMPSON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL									
	OCTOBER 2010			OCTOBER 2015			2020-2021 MCKIBBON		
Grade	Students	Rooms	Avg Class	Students	Rooms	Avg Class	Students	Rooms	Avg Class
5	49	2	24.50	59	2	29.50	79	4	19.75
4	63	3	21.00	49	2	24.50	82	4	20.50
3	52	2	26.00	81	4	20.25	84	4	21.00
2	45	3	15.00	73	3	24.33	85	4	21.25
1	61	3	20.33	81	4	20.25	85	4	21.25
K	65	3	21.67	82	4	20.50	81	4	20.25
	335	16	20.94	425	19	22.37	496	24	20.67

Projected OMS Enrollment

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
6	409	436	436	441	439	450
7	382	403	429	429	434	435
8	336	371	391	416	416	423
Total: 6-8	1127	1210	1256	1286	1289	1308
	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	
6	478	470	477	469	477	
7	446	473	465	472	464	
8	424	435	461	453	460	
Total: 6-8	1348	1378	1403	1394	1401	

Confidence in Projections

Year	K Class	Births 5-yrs Previous	Birth to K %
<i>Actual</i>			
2010 - 2011	448	545	82%
2011 - 2012	450	537	84%
2012 - 2013	454	496	92%
2013 - 2014	471	558	84%
2014 - 2015	516	517	100%
2015 - 2016	483	563	86%
<i>Projected</i>			
2016 - 2017	487	545	89%
2017 - 2018	481	597	81%
2018 - 2019	483	616	78%
2019 - 2020	479	573	84%
2020 - 2021	476	604	79%

The Gibbs is a Flexible Option

- It will immediately provide relief at the middle school level, bringing the Ottoson back within its designed range.
- If in 15 to 30 years, town-wide middle school enrollment decreases to 950 - 1,050 students, but East Arlington's enrollment continues to grow, the Gibbs could become a K-5 elementary school at limited cost.
- If in 5 years enrollment starts to grow at the levels of the first McKibbon study, the town has the flexibility to convert the Gibbs to a K-5 elementary or 5th grade only school and potentially move the 8th grade to a wing of the newly renovated Arlington High School.
- If enrollment decreases town-wide, the Gibbs could be returned to surplus.

The Experts Support the Gibbs

- Superintendant of Schools prefers Gibbs
- Sixth grade teachers at OMS, when surveyed, indicated that they prefer Gibbs

Additional Benefit of Gibbs Renovation

In addition to the flexibility provided by bringing the Gibbs back online, Arlington will have renovated the almost 90 year old town building, which is in need of costly repairs, securing the building as a town asset for the next 50 years. This is a critical expenditure of money on an asset that is centrally located in Arlington, within walking distance of Arlington Center, but positioned in East Arlington where there are very few government buildings.

Modular Classroom Option

- Modular classrooms are no longer a cost effective solution.
 - January 2016 STM Article 2, \$3.1 million for Stratton modular classrooms.
 - Finance Committee Reserve Fund appropriation of \$735,000 for Thompson modular classrooms.
- Modular classrooms do not address core / shared spaces (gym, cafeteria, etc.).

Multi-Year Effort to Address School Challenges

- June 2011 – separated special education costs for budgetary purposes, setting growth at 7% annually.
- January 2014 – provided additional funding to school department through 25% Growth Factor calculation.
- January 2016 – Adjusted Growth Factor to 35%.
- January 2016 – Town Meeting endorsed funding for two modular classrooms at Thompson School.
- January 2016 – Town Meeting approved funding for renovation of Stratton elementary school.
- May 2016 – Finalize plans to expand building capacity at the middle (Gibbs) and elementary (Thompson) school level.

Financial Challenges Ahead

- On June 14, 2016 voters must approve a property tax increase to fund the current proposed school projects (Gibbs, Thompson, Minuteman, AHS Feasibility).
- In 2018 or 2019, voters will be asked to approve a property tax increase to rebuild / refurbish Arlington High School.
- Current projected operating deficit in FY2022 is 12.4% of property tax revenue.

The Finance Committee asks for
your support under STM Article 3.

Thank You!